

Switzerland to Croatia 2024



Day - 3



Bike packed and ready to go. Bike bag is in the orange back-pack.

By the way, a big thank you to my cycle club, Bigfootcc, for loan of the two bike bags.

Karen and I made half a day of things by driving to Dover and going on into the NT cliff walk area. This is really spectacular and it was a lovely sunny day so that was good.

Then we said our farewells and I moved into the confusing labyrinth of Dover docks , I completely missed the Cycle red line! Onto the boat and off to EU Europe.

At Calais, it was a bit confusing coming off the boat but before long you pick up the signs for Calais Ville and so I found my hotel without trouble.

Day-2

Adventures started after finding some breakfast in town . Train from Calais Frethun is about a 5 mile journey and I wanted to have bags of time to pack my cycle bag. Problem was that I had thought the owner- Benoit would open reception at 8.20 or so as my bike was locked up there , but he didn't turn up until 8.50 and so I was on the road at about 9am with 1 hour to go. Set a bearing of SSE on my compass and cycled like mad to the station. Turns out I had 40 minutes to spare. Then disassembled the bike and experimented with the best ways of getting it in the bag which took about 10 minutes. Picture of before and after as below





Arriving in Paris-, Gare de Nord, I had to make my way to Gare de Lyon. Traveling the metro is just two stops , but the bag is really heavy and getting heavier as the day progresses . So it's just a tiring process.

Train to Lausanne. Change train to Sion where my ride buddy Andy Spalding picked me up and drove up his chalet in the ski town of Nendaz





Couple of piccies from Andy's chalet balcony above

Day -1

Today is a rest day ! I had to take my bike to a bike shop as the front brake had totally failed (and yes I did get my bike serviced). So a hydraulic top up was required . Ten minutes work done and 2 swiss francs poorer .

We went for a walk about town and into the hills.



An event going on today is the “tour of the resorts” [click here](#), an extreme cycling event, which if you elect to ride the black route involves a 150 mile cycle, 27000 ft (height of Everest) of climbing and a 2.30am start! Andy had elected to do the easy orange route, only 55 miles and a mere 9000 ft of climbing, but he pulled out on the grounds of being too extreme before our cycle trip.

Day 1

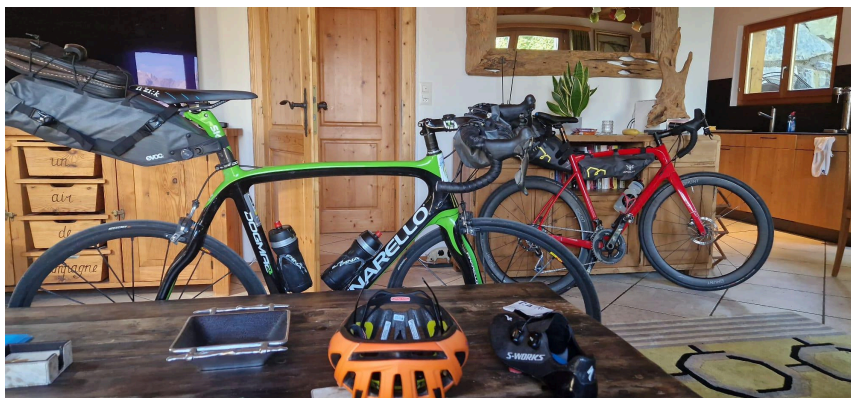
As an aside to our adventures, Andy and I talked about our mutual friend Jane's visit to Kyrgyzstan. She has gone out there to support her brother do a 500 mile unsupported gravel ride in that country. Andy shared a picture of John as below. How cool is this!



Day 1

70 miles and 4000 ft of climbing

Picture below shows packed bags. My bike is slightly obscured by Andy's, our saddle bags are very similar. I opted for a crossbar bag in lieu of a handlebar bag. Andy opted for the world's smallest ever handlebar bag. I think it's just big enough to accommodate a toothbrush.



This was a mixed day. A beautiful 3000 ft descent to start the day from Nendaz to Sion. Then mostly a lovely ride along the Rhone cantering along at nearly 20mph. But the second half was all climbing, 4000 ft in one go but also on very busy roads and it became very hot, so it was a struggle-but we got there.

I don't know if there was an event going on, but we were passed by hundreds of high performance cars, who had to open their throttles with an alarming bang as they passed us to accelerate away. But honestly I'm not impressed as I think I could out accelerate them with my electric car (Steve F, let's hear it for the electric car!!). Also passed by streams of motorcyclists and to our delight we find ourselves sharing our hotel with 20 *hairy" British motorcyclists 😊😊

Tomorrow, I wait in trepidation . 6000 ft of climbing and I'm not getting any younger! Andy is quite persuasive that I can do it but we will have to see

Day 2

66 miles and 6000 ft climbing

The hairy bikers leaving



Click on this [Brum Brum](#)

Straight off we started the ascent to the Furka pass (should really be renamed the Fu.k-a pass). This is 3400 ft climb over 10 Miles (and the second biggest climb I have ever done) For me I was just in survival mode , 1st or 2nd gear the whole way. This took about 1h 50 minutes. Mostly Andy became a distant memory as he is quite a bit quicker on the hill ascents,, but he did wait for me at strategic points, notably the cafe near the top. I think he had a sneaky coffee waiting for me but he denies it. He asked how I was and did I want to stop. I responded , terrible and no, planning to stop at the cafe at the top, but.... there wasn't one!.



We then had a fast descent to the next climb, a 2000ft pass over 6 miles (like St. Calibra in elevation gain). Now I'm in total survival mode and went up the whole pass in 1st gear against wind that had picked up and dark clouds and drizzle.



Lunch was two hotdogs. Andy, using his best Swiss-German, made it plain that he didn't want two extremely expensive sausages that had been placed before him , but after some clever use of sign language, walked away with the double sausage hotdog for 16 pounds...

After that, 7000 ft of descent over 30 miles to tonight's destination.

Tonight , Andy has booked us into some kind of stable . The room has 11 straw beds . Only thing is that both Andy and I are very allergic to hay, But the proprietor advises us that straw is different from hay. Our bedroom is below



To get an idea on cost savings tonight, our meal in town was twice as expensive as our accommodation.

Marko , the owner, is a cheerful soul. I asked where he got his English from as his first language is Italian, and second French. He said the Beatles which explains why he said yer instead of yes , Eeyah and Bifter

Marko is on the right



Apart from the small farm, Marko has 18 horses , which just live out their lives in the fields



Day 3

70 miles 3000 ft climbing to lake Como

First section was nice . Stopped in Bellinzona which has an impressive looking castle .



Then followed the last main climb of this section of the trip, 1200ft. After this we dropped down to Lake Lugano, and then Italy!





Onwards to Lake Como and the pretty town of Menaggio where we waited for a ferry to cross Como to Varenn enjoying the world's best ice cream. Beautiful spot





From there we cycled down the east side of Como to tonight's stop at Lavello, just south of lake Como . The route varied from very picturesque to motorway standard road (for about 4 miles) and loads of sh.t scary tunnels.. Andy assures me there was no other route. Well we survived somehow.

Tonight's dinner was very nice but a bit haute cuisine and not enough of it.

Tomorrow is likely to be very wet . But just two days to Venice now all being well

Day 4

85 miles 2000 ft climbing.

First thing, another climb ! Just 800 ft. Then flat lands, much less interesting.

Highlights? Lake Garda and the small town of Peschiera Del Garda to the south of the lake.



Andy has taught me a new technique for drying clothes that you have washed. You lay the garment out on a towel , roll up the towel and then wring out the towel twisting from both ends. It works really well. Also part of his technique is to shower with your bike clothes on and then take them off and do a dance on the fallen garments, stamping them. I'm pretty sure this technique is unique to certain lost tribes in the Amazon and a particular Swiss Canton .

Day 5

15 miles to Venice

We have decided to hit a partial abort button . The weather is terrible. Storm now , biblical deluge predicted later . But we have to cycle 15 miles to Verona ,

Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes

Then we will catch a train to Venice.

Cheating?

Verona turned out to be amazing !





We have got to Venice now and investigating the next part of the trip which involves getting a boat out to one of the outlying islands to start with

Stormy stormy stormy



Click here [STORM](#)

Day 6

To kick off the day , I had to cycle to Maestro on the mainland for an urgent repair to the bike . Unfortunately I missed the cycle path and had to cycle about 3 miles with buses and cars buzzing by me at 60mph. Onto the mainland I had a choice of cycling to Rome on a motorway (at least I would have had my own lane,the hard shoulder), or leg it over fast dual carriageways both ways . In fact traffic into Venice was nose to tail going around 20mph, so I had to signal traffic to stop for me!

Sightseeing on my return. Very wearying. Some pictures below, but the first two pictures are a Where's Wally competition (one for Andy and one for me).





One is more challenging than the other!

And a few more from Venice





Day 7

78 miles. Flat

Last night we got a boat down to St. Marco, and then onto the Chiesa della Pietà - Santa Maria della Visitazione, for a short concert of Vivaldi's four seasons. What else does one do in this great city? The birthplace of Vivaldi. Then a boat back home and a small beer. Andy is affronted by the cost of the beer, 9 euro for 40ml and he says that the glasses were not even filled properly. I think he fears destitution

Now we are on a boat to Lido. Final views of Venice. Then another boat to Sabbione.



Today's ride was flat, fast ,and hot . Seaside towns and open flat countryside. Now we are in the town of Montefalco , pleasant enough, central square is impressive



Pink Socks

A word on the washing of pink socks! The die comes out and then all garments become pink as this little bear found out to his cost when he was put in charge of laundry...



Day 8

71 Mile's 5100 ft climbing

Today felt like a slog. 40 miles gentle uphill. Then a fast descent to the sea at Rijeka. Stopped for ice cream there- heavenly! The last 10 miles were surprisingly difficult and as of now, I'm at my most tired on this trip . Tomorrow is likely to be worse, 7700ft of climbing in the rain

Our route by passed Trieste and soon enough we came to the border with Slovenia



Then we went on and stopped for lunch at this place which specializes in boar



The image is in fact very macabre . Four jolly pigs discussing building a house in brick rather than straw , but eating some of their relatives ! And below , sadly, they are seen rotating on a spit .

Well as we had only 30 miles to go, we opted for a light lunch .



In our short time in Slovenia, I am reminded of the Adventures of the Irish Writer Dervla Murphy who cycled from Dublin to India in 1960. In her inventory , she took a pistol . Purpose being to ward off wild boar and amorous advances. In Slovenia she used it for wild boar . But neither Andy nor I thought to bring a pistol!

And then into Croatia



D9

52 Miles 7700 ft climb. 4 Miles gravel

And an absolute deluge!

I discover that Andy is a frustrated would be meteorologist. He gives very precise information on what time the next storm will be based on the best go to websites . He is often right . So he predicted that this morning there would be a deluge starting at 9am..... over the next two and a half hours I don't think either of us have ever got so wet for so long. At one point we were on high ground, no other human beings, when it was so torrential and windy that we took shelter under a bit of a tree. The only other living things were vultures looking for their next dinner.....







Later on, now not so wet, we ascended 700m up a lovely path with 12% grade at times. I made most of the climb. At the top, it's very beautiful but we then had 4 Miles of really difficult gravel. I can feel the shock and horror amongst some of you roadies.

Overall today, the scenario has been stunning and finally away from traffic, shame it was mostly in mist. Tomorrow will be better.

Arriving at our destination, our proprietor for the evening, without a word of English, immediately made clear that Schnapps was on offer, sadly we declined as we were parched from lack of water (apart from the water from the gods earlier).

Along the way , Andy had assured me that we would find regular places to stop and refresh, but after the 5 Mile Mark we saw no living human, only horses , vultures and a rottweiler with its one armed owner (you may ask why he only had one arm)

D10.

58 miles 2700 ft

Today was stunning, riding on small roads, virtually no traffic. Some of the best cycling I've ever done.

And then two dog Incidents. The 1st was a large dog that went first for me. My tactic was to cycle at the dog and then away at full speed. Trouble was that this dog could out-cycle me, so it became a race for survival. Giving up on me for dinner , next in line was Andy. His tactic was to dummy the dog , swerving dangerously to avoid his open jaws...

The second one ,three wild dogs running alongside us at speed to intercept us, so we had to speed up to miss them by inches .

Christianity is everywhere. This is opposite to tonight's apartment.



And our apartment is at the rear

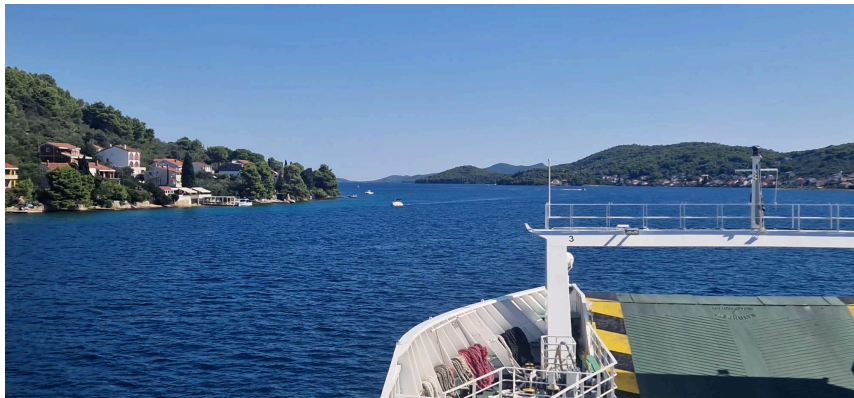


D11.

84 Miles. 2700 ft climbing 3 miles by ferry

Today was a nice sunny day . To start the day we had a 700 ft climb , but after that a 2000ft descent Which was the best ever, truly. We seemed to come down a side of the mountain with continuous incredible vistas to the left and a road which was wide without tight bends and little traffic. It's worth going to Croatia just to do this descent .

After that, cycled on to Zader and then a boat to the island of Uglian and thereon a beautiful 20 mile ride down the island and then to Pasman island and the town of Tkon where we are staying.



D12

49 miles 1500 ft climbing

Took the boat back to the mainland and thereon for the next 20 miles , cycling into very high winds and a distant tornado.



This part of the route is much busier. Sometimes very scenic , but a few too many busy roads for my liking.

We have arrived at a resort called Oaza, near Primosten. This is a proper seaside resort with a little cove and wonderful swimming (the sea was glorious) .





Tonight we cycled to Primosten for dinner, and then cycled back along a narrow path by the sea, this time in the dark. Andy had assured me it would be well lit, but the only lighting was lightning from a distant storm. The trouble was that on one side there was a fall to the sea below of 10 to 20 ft. Neither of us had lights, but had the benefit of some dodgy local wine in our bloodstream.... So I cycled gingerly but wobbly and with great trepidation wondering where Andy was who had zipped off in the darkness....

D13

40 Miles 2500 ft climbing

Final day

Our journey is at an end . Andy flies back tomorrow. I am staying for a week to meet my sister and brother in law tomorrow who are coming off a boat from Ancona, Italy .

Tonight we explored a bit of Split Old town

A free visit to a modern art Gallery



After dinner , Andy managed to forget his giant travel bag and had to be chased by the waitress down the streets of the old town to return it. The bag only contained things like room key, passport, driving license, and cash, so nothing really important.

Afterwards Andy set a route plan to navigate the 1 mile to our hotel (along the sea front...). Google had decided to speak to him in Croatian (which didn't help), and it took a full 15 minutes to navigate out of the maze of the old town (about 200m from where we started).



A few general remarks

This trip came about from an idea I had to cycle to Athens starting from the middle of Europe. I discussed it with Andy and he said he would come with me as far as Venice. My sister then said she and her husband were going to Split for a leisurely cycle to Dubrovnik, and she agreed to come a week early, Andy agreed to extend on to Split and I gave up on cycling to Athens. The route then became set following discussions between us with an aspiration to follow euroroute 8 from Venice and to include a few ferry rides (6 in total).

Cycling highlight? Croatia was awesome, but the roads were not always , well ... good.

Andy did the day by day route planning and we split the night bookings . The only thing to go slightly wrong was that on day 5 , due to the prediction of awful storms, we elected to get the train to Venice that day.

We have covered about 740 miles and 37,000 feet of climbing in 11 cycling days. Both are records for me.

It's been a pleasure to ride with Andy. Paced me along on many sections of the ride and been good company

That's the end of the story/blog. First I have ever done .